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Fall 9-1-2008

PSC 525.01: Strategic Planning and Leadership

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Recommended Citation

Tompkins, Jonathan, "PSC 525.01: Strategic Planning and Leadership" (2008). *Syllabi*. 6716.

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Political Science 525
Strategic Planning and Leadership
Fall 2008

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Course Description

For over a decade a movement has been underway to shift the focus of management from administering programs to achieving results. Strategic planning is an important tool in accomplishing this paradigm shift. Bryson defines it as a disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions that shape and guide what an organization is, what it does, and why it does it.

But, despite its importance, strategic planning is only a tool. This course is organized around the theme that strategic planning cannot realize its fullest potential unless it is put into the service of visionary, success-oriented leadership. Although strategic planning can help us align organizational mission, internal capacities, and environmental realities, it is ultimately leadership, not planning, that makes organizational excellence possible and achievable.

Course Objectives

1. To understand strategic planning as a decision-making process.
2. To understand the theory of organizational success that underlies the process.
3. To develop skill in conducting the forms of analysis that strategic planning requires.
4. To learn how strategic planning can contribute to the success of visionary leadership.

Required Text

John M. Bryson, Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004).

Course Requirements and Grading

Students are required to read all reading assignments, be prepared to discuss them in class, and write a simulated strategic plan for a government or nonprofit agency. This plan will be submitted in five installments (20 points each), with the final draft being worth 100 points.

A = 186-200 A- = 180-185 B+ = 174-179 B = 166-173 B- = 160-165
C+ = 154-159 C = 146-153 C- = 140-145.

You are required to choose a public or nonprofit agency with which you are familiar and write a simulated strategic plan for it (you won't actually submit it to the agency). You are to pretend that you are a staff person entrusted with facilitating the planning process. You lead your staff through the various steps of the process and write up the results of your group's analyses as follows:

- Introduction
- Agency Mission, Vision, and Values
- Strategic Issues, Goals, and Actions
- Appendix A: Mandate and Mission Analysis
- Appendix B: Stakeholder Analysis
- Appendix C: SWOT Analysis

Weekly Assignments

Sept. 3

Introduction to Strategic Planning

Read Bryson Chapters 1 and 2, and Chapter 1 of Michael Allison and Jude Kaye's Strategic Planning for Nonprofit Organizations (on electronic reserve; password is psc525).

Skim the strategic plan for the US. Forest Service at www.fs.fed.us. You will find the link on the right side of the home page toward the bottom. As you read, consider the following:

- 1) What is a strategic plan? What does one actually look like?
- 2) What is the process by which one is typically developed?
- 3) Why should agencies engage in strategic planning?

Sept. 10

Underlying Theory of Organizational Success

Read Bryson Chapter 3. Take a look at the examples of strategic plans written by other students (on electronic reserve): Karen Aguilera, Kristi Murphy, and Brandi Roberts.

For class, think about how plans like these can "theoretically" drive an organization toward a state of excellence.

Sept. 17

Strategic Planning in Political Environments

Read Barton Wechsler and Robert Backoff's "Policy Making and Administration in State Agencies" on electronic reserve.

For class, consider this question: Does the strategy of an organization necessarily aim at achieving a state of excellence?

Begin investigating your agency's formal mandates, those things you are formally charged with doing (Bryson, p. 97-98).

Sept. 24

Creating Public Value

Read Bryson Chapter 4 (pp. 94-97 only); Mark Moore, Creating Public Value, Chapters 1 and 2 (pp. 13-43); and Nanus and Dobbs' Leaders Who Make a Difference, Chapter 2 "The Greater Good" (pp. 27-45) on electronic reserve.

For class, consider this question: how does your agency make the world a better place? As the angel helped Jimmy Stewart understand in *It's a Wonderful Life*, what would the world have lost if you had never existed?

Oct. 1

Mandate and Mission Analysis

Read Bryson Chapter 4 (pp. 102-107 and 113-118 only); Allison and Kaye Chapter 3 (pp. 85-99 only) on electronic reserve, and submit writing assignment #1 by Wednesday, Oct. 8.

As you read, think about the extent to which your formal mandates limit your "unconstrained field of action." Think about your essential purpose, i.e., your *raison d'être*.

Oct. 8

****No class** Submit writing assignment #1 by email and begin #2.**

Oct. 15

Stakeholder Analysis

Read Bryson Chapter 4 (pp. 107-113 only), read Burt Nanus' Visionary Leadership (pp. 62-69) on electronic reserve, and submit writing assignment #2 by Monday, Oct. 13.

As you read, think about who your primary stakeholders are, what they expect from you, and what it would take for them to view you as an excellent agency.

Oct. 22

Visionary Leadership – Developing a Vision of Excellence

Read Nanus and Dobbs Chapter 4 ("Leader as Visionary"), Allison and Kaye Chapter 3 (pp. 99-123 only), and Albrecht, *The Northbound Train* (pp. 17-21). All on electronic reserve.

Oct. 29

Vision, Values, Principles, and Success Strategy

Read brief excerpt from James Q. Wilson Chapters 1 and 2 (electronic reserve), read the brief excerpt from Stephen Covey's *Principle-Centered Leadership* (pp. 153-155); re-read the last 9 pages of Allison and Kaye Chapter 3 dealing with guiding values, and submit assignment #3 by Monday, Nov. 3.

As you read the Wilson excerpt, ask yourself: 1) what was Principal Hogan's vision of educational excellence? 2) What did he see as the school's "critical environmental problem"? 3) What did he see as the school's "critical task"?

- Nov. 5** **SWOT Analysis**
Read Bryson Chapter 5 and submit writing assignment #4 by Monday, Nov. 10.
- Nov. 12** **Strategic Issues**
Read Bryson Chapter 6 and Nanus and Dobbs Chapter 5 (pp. 97-117 only).
- Nov. 19** ****Holiday****
- Nov. 26** **Strategic Goals, Objectives, and Actions**
Read Bryson Chapter 7 and submit writing assignment #5 by Monday, Dec. 1.
- Dec. 3** **Implementing and Revising Strategic Plans**
Read Bryson Chapters 9 and 10, and submit the final draft of your Strategic Plan with appendices by Thursday, Dec. 11.

Writing Assignments

Writing Assignment #1. Appendix A: Mandate Analysis and Mission Clarification

Write a summary statement (perhaps 3-6 pages in length double-spaced) that 1) establishes the importance of mandate analysis and mission clarification, 2) identifies your organization's formal mandates (not informal mandates); and 3) clarifies the organization's fundamental mission (e.g., what it exists to accomplish; what public value it seeks to create). Do not write a formal mission statement.

Advice: 1) Take general guidance from the three student papers on electronic reserve but don't treat them as "perfect models".

2) If your organization is a nonprofit, you will not have formal statute-based mandates; nonetheless, your "unconstrained field of action" may be restricted by tax codes, articles of incorporation, by-laws, etc.

3) Whenever possible, provide brief quotes that capture your agency's mandated purposes and scope of authority as cited in the law, articles of incorporation, etc.

4) When clarifying your mission, be sure to clarify what public value your organization exists to create. (How might society be diminished if your organization ceased to exist?)

5) Remember that your primary purpose is to determine how much autonomy your agency has to define its mission and its path to organizational excellence (its "unconstrained field of action"); thus you need to close by drawing out the implications of your mandate and mission analysis for your unconstrained field of action.

Writing Assignment #2. Appendix B: Stakeholder Analysis

Write a summary statement (perhaps 4-8 pages) that 1) establishes the importance of stakeholder analysis, 2) identifies your organization's 5 or 6 most important stakeholders, and 3) draws out the implications of your stakeholder analysis for your organization's vision and strategy for success.

For each stakeholder, clarify a) what the stakeholder needs or expects from your organization, b) what criteria the stakeholder uses to evaluate your performance (what it will take for them to view you as "excellent"), and c) how dependent your organization is on the stakeholder and the extent to which this limits your "unconstrained field of action" in pursuing your vision and strategy for success.

Writing Assignment #3. Vision, Values, and Strategy for Success [Body of Plan]

[You will later incorporate this assignment into the body of your strategic plan (rather than into an appendix)]

Write a summary statement (perhaps 3-4 pages) that:

1) explains your success strategy for becoming the best organization of your kind in the nation (you will want to identify your basic "success factors" and your underlying theory of how these will necessarily drive your success); and

2) describes your vision of excellence. As Bryson suggests, "Imagine that it is three to five years from now and your organization has been put together in a very exciting way. It is a recognized leader in its field. Imagine that you are a newspaper reporter assigned to do a story on the organization. You have thoroughly reviewed the organization's mandates, mission, services, personnel, financing, organization, management, and so on. Describe in no more than one page **what you see.**" Proceed in the following kind of way: We envision an organization that is recognized for excellence in x, y, and z. We envision an organization that is structured and managed in x, y, and z manner. Your vision of excellence may include such things as what the agency is achieving five years from now, how it is addressing its "critical environmental problem" (see James Q. Wilson), what its distinctive competencies are, what it is doing to balance stakeholder expectations without straying from its mission, the way staff members relate to each other, the way staff members relate to clients, the nature of the physical and social environment at work, etc.

3) Identify the values and/or principles you have chosen to guide your efforts to realize your vision of excellence. These might be thought of as "cultural commitments."

Writing Assignment #4. Appendix C: SWOT Analysis

Write a summary statement that 1) establishes the importance of SWOT analysis, 2) describes each of the most important 6-10 SWOTs facing your organization, and 3) draws out the implications of this analysis for achieving your vision and strategy for success.

Remember that this analysis relates to strategic planning's underlying theory of organizational success, i.e., finding the optimal alignment between the agency's mission and vision of success, its internal capacities, and its external realities. Thus, your summary analysis should capture patterns in your SWOTS that point the way to the desired alignment (e.g. beefing up internal capacities; adjusting to external forces).

Writing Assignment #5. Strategic Issues, Goals, and Actions [Body of Plan]

Write a "strategic plan" that 1) identifies the most critical 3-4 strategic issues facing your organization as it pursues a state of excellence, and 2) identifies the goals, objectives, and/or actions you have decided upon for addressing each strategic issue.

Remember Bryson's advice: "An adequate strategic issue description 1) phrases the issue as a challenge that the organization can do something about and that has more than one solution, 2) discusses the confluence of factors (mission, mandates, and internal and external environmental aspects, or SWOTs) that make the issue strategic, and 3) articulates the consequences of not addressing the issue."

Finally, see if you can add a brief conclusion to the plan that somehow ties things together -- perhaps by clarifying how resolving your strategic issues will help the organization realize its vision of excellence.

The Final Strategic Plan

Rewrite assignments #1-#5 based on the provided feedback and compile them into a single document as indicated above. Note that assignments #3 and #5 will become the body of the plan, whereas the remaining assignments comprise Appendices A, B, and C. Take general guidance from student papers on electronic reserve.